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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 002093

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STATE FOR ECA/PE/C/CU (DSCHUMAN), ECA/A/L (JCONNERLEY), AND NEA/PPD  
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SUBJECT: PROGRAM EVALUATION: SAPPHIRE TRIO CHARMS KUWAITIS WITH  
"RHAPSODY IN BLUE"

#### Summary

11. GPRA FY06Q3: Summary: The Sapphire Trio, an American chamber music group, conducted its first tour of Kuwait on May 20 and 21, where the musicians conducted a number of performances and teaching workshops. The trio demonstrated their virtuoso musical skills and unique repertoire of classical and modern American compositions for the piano, violin, and clarinet to diverse audiences of students, musicians, music teachers, and the Kuwaiti public. They performed for 483 Kuwaitis in four performances over two days and enjoyed extensive, positive media coverage. End Summary.

#### American Values and Music Education

12. The goal of the Sapphire Trio's visit was to provide insight into American society and values by exposing a variety of Kuwaiti audiences to American chamber music and musicians, an uncommon opportunity in Kuwait. This exceptional performing arts program also demonstrated support for music education and music educators in Kuwait, which are confronting intense ultraconservative criticism.

#### Music under Pressure

13. The Sapphire Trio, an American chamber music group, conducted its first tour of Kuwait on May 20 and 21, where the musicians conducted a number of performances and teaching workshops. The trio exhibited their virtuoso musical skills and singular repertoire of classical and modern American compositions for the piano, violin, and clarinet before diverse audiences of students, musicians, music teachers, and the Kuwaiti public. Their visit coincided with increasing attacks in the media and the school system by conservative Islamists against arts and music education in Kuwait. The two-day program included riveting performances at the annual International Music Festival, hosted by Kuwait's National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters, and at the U.S. Embassy, hosted by the Ambassador for participants in Embassy-sponsored educational and exchange programs for non-elite youth. The ensemble also conducted music workshops at the American School of Kuwait and Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET).

#### Breaking Stereotypes for Women

14. Comprised of three female professional musicians who formed the group in 1998, Margaret Nichols Baldridge (Violin), Jody Graves (Piano), and Maxine Ramey (Clarinet), the Sapphire Trio deftly performed newly-created works for clarinet, violin, and piano. Dr. Baldridge and Dr. Ramey are music professors at the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana, and Dr. Graves is a music professor at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Washington. These active soloists and chamber musicians, who regularly perform throughout the

U.S. and abroad, astonished Kuwaiti audiences with their artistry.

#### A Unique Experience

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¶5. The American School of Kuwait's 93 music students were electrified by the all-female ensemble's performance on May 20. That evening, the group impressed viewers as the United States' representatives at the International Music Festival, organized by Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. A near capacity crowd of 220 filled the National Council's theater to hear the group's renditions of "Rhapsody in Blue" and other well-known American compositions. Following the performance, a young Kuwaiti woman stated, "We are so honored that you are here. We don't get to see things like this."

#### Transformation: Gershwin Meets Oud

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¶6. On May 21, the trio performed at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), Kuwait's largest institution of higher education that serves over 20,000 Kuwaiti students. The concert segued into a jam session with talented Kuwaiti musicians Dr. Rashed Juma (violinist) and Fawzi Al-Lingawi (oud), joined by Romanian pan-flute player Nikolai Fuiculit. The impromptu demonstration of the unifying force of music across diverse cultures thrilled the 48 Kuwaiti music students in attendance. The trio's tour concluded with a presentation for 123 English Access Microscholarship students, parents and teachers at a rare visit to the Embassy. The high school English students pelted the trio with numerous questions. "Your music gives me hope," raved a young scarf-clad woman who claimed it was the first time she had heard classical music. Another young student translated for his mother, who he says never listens to music. He quoted her as saying, in Arabic, "this performance rocked!"

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#### Extensive Media Coverage

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¶7. The Trio achieved extensive positive coverage in the Kuwaiti media. Their performances were covered by Kuwait TV and positive coverage spanned three days in the following Kuwaiti newspapers:

05/22/06

Al-Qabas, p.36, 1/8 page, 1 photo, circ. 65,000, Arabic

Al-Watan, p. 43, 1/8 page, 1 photo, circ. 65,000, Arabic

Al-Seyassah, p. 31, 1/8 page, 1 photo, circ. 45,000, -Arabic

Al-Anba, p. 18, 1/4 page, 3 photos, circ. 40,000, Arabic

05/23/06

Kuwait Times, p. 7, 1/8 page, 1 photo, circ. 35,000, English

05/24/06

The Daily Star, p. 3, 1/8 page, circ. 15,000, English

Al-Rai Al-Aam, p. 24, 1/4 page, 3 photos, circ. 70,000, Arabic

#### Excellent Results in Reaching Youth Audiences

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¶8. The Embassy thanks Public Affairs Manama for facilitating the Sapphire Trio's visit to Kuwait. The group was outstanding, with surprisingly positive results in reaching audiences who had never before experienced chamber music. Attendees, particularly students from the English Access program and PAAET, as well as music festival guests, were clearly moved by their sterling performances and winning manner, which sparked an interest in a new kind of music for many of these young people. We highly recommend these talented musicians to Embassies seeking to engage both sophisticated listeners and youth audiences.

#### Cost Sharing

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¶9. Embassy Public Affairs used program funds in support of this Performing Arts Initiative in cooperation with Manama Public Affairs to cover international airfare and on-the-ground expenses. Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, the Music Department

at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, and the American School of Kuwait generously provided venues free of charge.

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